

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 1-16 and 23-32 without prejudice.

1-16. (Cancelled).

17. (Original) An apparatus for printing a multicolor image formed from at least two component images on a multitude of shaped edible pieces, said apparatus comprising:

a first printing station effective to print a first component image on said pieces at a first printing position;

a second printing station effective to print a subsequent second component image on said pieces at a second printing position;

a transporting surface for moving said pieces from said first printing position to said second printing position, wherein said transporting surface includes a plurality of transporting recess portions; and

at least one retaining member for each transporting recess portion effective to removably trap said pieces in said transporting recess portions to maintain a registering relationship of said first component image and said second component image.

18. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said transporting recess portions are adapted to position a non-planar surface of said pieces above said transporting surface.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, further including a retaining plate, wherein portions of said retaining plate form said retaining members, and said retaining plate moves cooperatively with said transporting surface to trap said pieces in said transporting recess portions.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said transporting recess portions each includes an opening through which said retaining member extends to trap said pieces in said transporting recess portions.

21. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said transporting recess portions each includes a resilient portion, and said retaining member urges said pieces against said resilient portions.

22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said retaining member includes a resilient portion, and said retaining member urges said pieces against said resilient portions.

23-32. (Cancelled).

33. (Original) An apparatus for forming a registered image on a shaped edible piece, the apparatus comprising:

a transport surface including at least one shaped recess and a vacuum hole positioned within the shaped recess, said edible piece being laterally,

longitudinally and rotationally positioned within the shaped recess at a predetermined position;

a first printer station at a first position along a transport path that forms a first component image on the shaped piece while in the predetermined position;

a second printer station downstream from the first position that forms a second component of said composite image on the edible piece in registration with the first component image of the composite image; and

a vacuum pump in communication with and applying a pressure differential to the vacuum hole to maintain the edible piece in the predetermined position within the recess while the edible piece is at and between the first and second print stations.

34. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein a non-planar portion of said edible piece protrudes above the transport surface.

35. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein the vacuum hole is positioned at a deepest portion of said shaped recess.

36. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein the vacuum hole is positioned on a side wall of the shaped recess.

37. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, further comprising a valve system connected to the vacuum pump that applies a first pressure differential at

the print stations and a second pressure differential, less than the first pressure differential, between the print stations.

38. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, further comprising a vacuum plenum system between the shaped recesses and the vacuum pump and disposed below the transport path.

39. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the vacuum plenum system includes first and second portions that extend transverse to the transport path below the first and second print stations, respectively, and a third portion including sub-plenums that extend parallel to the transport path between the first and second print stations.

40. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein the first and second portions of the plenum system are subject to first and second pressure differentials and that are substantially equal, and the third portion of the plenum system is subject to a third pressure differential less than the first and second pressure differentials.

41. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein the transport surface comprises at least one carrier bar including a row of shaped recesses identical to said at least one shaped recess, wherein said first and second portions or the plenum system are dimensional to have widths substantially equal to a width of the row of shaped recesses on the carrier bar.

42. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein each of said sub-plenums in said third portion of said plenum system corresponds to one of said shaped recesses in said row.

43. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said transporting recess portion includes a resilient portion.

44. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said apparatus comprises a multi-lane system and total output of said apparatus is at least 1,000 pieces per lane per hour.

45. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said first printing station or said second printing station comprises an offset printer.

46. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said first printing station or said second printing station comprises an inkjet printer.

47. (Original) A carrier bar comprising:  
a main body including an upper surface and a lower surface;  
at least one shaped recess formed within said main body along said upper surface, said shaped recess including a shallow and a deep end; and  
at least one vacuum hole formed in said lower surface and that communicates with said deep end of the shaped recess.

48. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein said vacuum hole is positioned at a lowermost portion of said deep end.

49. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein said vacuum hole is positioned along a back side of the deep end.

50. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein leading and trailing sides of the bar are provided with a tongue and a groove, respectively.

51. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein leading and trailing sides of the carrier bar have a stepped configuration.

52. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein the lower surface of the carrier bar includes a mounting flange that mates with a receiving groove of a carrier bar transport system.

53. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein at least two vacuum holes are provided for each said at least one shaped pocket.

54. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, further comprising a resilient member provided in said deep end adjacent said vacuum hole.

55. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 54, wherein the resilient member is an O-ring that surrounds said vacuum hole.

56. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein each shaped recess is formed at least in part by a sleeve that reciprocates in a direction perpendicular to the upper and lower surfaces of the carrier bar.

57. (Original) The carrier bar according, to claim 47, wherein each shaped recess includes a porous resilient Portion.

58. (Original) The carrier bar according to claim 47, wherein each shaped pocket includes guide-structure capable of longitudinally, laterally and rotationally positioning articles received within the shaped recess in a predetermined position.